

**COMPOSITIONS AND METHODS FOR ENHANCING IMMUNE
RESPONSES MEDIATED BY ANTIGEN-PRESENTING CELLS**

Pursuant to 35 U.S.C. §202(c), it is hereby acknowledged that the U.S. Government has certain rights in the invention described herein, which was made, in part, with funds from the National Institutes of Health, grant numbers CA 57362 and CA 36727.

The disclosure of commonly-owned, co-pending U.S. Application Serial No. 08/299,285, is incorporated by reference herein.

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FIELD OF THE INVENTION

The present invention relates to the field of vaccines and stimulation of acquired immunity. In particular, the present invention provides novel compositions designed to deliver specific antigens to antigen presenting cells and simultaneously deliver signals to those cells that produce a desired immune response.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Several publications are referenced in this application by numerals in parenthesis in order to more fully describe the state of the art to which this invention pertains. Full citations for these references are found at the end of the specification. The disclosure of each of these publications is incorporated by reference herein.

The basis of acquired, specific immunity in an organism is the ability to discriminate between self and non-self antigenic substances. The mammalian immune system uses cell surface molecules known as the major histocompatibility complex (MHC) for discriminating between self from non-self. There are two classes of MHC molecules: Class I molecules are found on all nucleated

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cell types in the body; Class II molecules are found mainly on cells involved in producing immune responses. Most specific immune responses are generated against peptides or peptide derivatives associated with MHC molecules.

The structure of MHC molecules is such that they naturally bind small peptides, glycopeptides, phosphopeptides, and the like. One important function of MHC molecules is to bind peptides that are derived from processed products of proteins expressed in cells expressing the MHC molecules, and to transport these to the cell surface for display to the immune system. In this way, some MHC molecules function to expose the immune system to peptides that are representative of normal cellular proteins. This process occurs during development, when self is learned, and continues throughout the organism's lifespan. Different mechanisms of immune tolerance prevent the organism from responding to "self" peptides associated with MHC.

The introduction of non-self proteins into cells results in the appearance of new and different peptides in association with the MHC molecules; these are recognized as "non-self," resulting in an immune response. For example, viral infection of a cell will result in the production of viral peptides expressed on the surface of antigen-presenting cells in association with MHC molecules (generally Class I MHC). Viral peptides presented with MHC molecules at the cell surface will often be recognized as foreign and an immune response will be mounted. Autoimmune disease can occur if tolerance to some self peptides is lost, or if immune response is produced against viral or other foreign proteins that cross react with normal peptides in the host organism.

In the case of bacterial infections or other insults from external sources, new proteins or compounds enter the organism. Some cells involved in the immune

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response are capable of phagocytosing foreign organisms or proteins. These immune cells degrade (process) the protein products and the derived peptides are expressed at the cell surface in association with MHC molecules, where a specific adaptive immune response is generated against novel non-self components. This activity is called antigen processing and presentation and cells that mediate this activity are called Antigen Presenting Cells (APC's). Many different immune cell types, including macrophages, dendritic cells, B cells, and other associated cell types, perform this function.

Antigen alone is often insufficient to produce an immune response. Sometimes, antigen must be presented with accompanying "signals" that are mediated by ligand-receptor interactions between the APCs and the responding lymphocytes or between these cells and soluble factors that are present in the surrounding environment. The soluble factors include cytokines and other mediators of inflammation that are usually present at sites of infections or insult (complement, kinins, other growth and cytokine factors). The signals can be positive in nature, resulting in lymphocyte proliferation and generation of an adaptive immune response, or negative in nature, resulting in apoptosis of responding lymphocytes and perhaps immune tolerance to that antigen. Antigen presentation often occurs in the presence of helper T cells or other cell types that secrete arrays of cytokines, which influence or determine the type of immune response that is induced. At a cellular level, specific immune responses are generated in a mixed cellular environment that includes different types of antigen presenting cells, helper T lymphocytes, other types of regulatory cells, and the responding lymphocytes (B cells for antibody responses and T cells for cellular responses). Direct recognition of peptides by T cells can also occur with some cell types, such as allografts, where the allogeneic MHC is directly recognized as

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foreign.

Antigen processing and its impact on types of immune responses to specific antigens. The mechanism by which antigen is processed and presented and the parameters that determine the types of immune responses that are generated (antibody versus cellular) are at present not well understood for many antigens. It is believed that there are different classes of APCs that can produce different types of immune responses. In general, APC-induced responses to exogenous antigens that are taken up by endocytosis are believed to be presented to the immune system in the context of Class II MHC and lead to recruitment of T helper cells that interact with B cells and ultimately produce an antibody response. In contrast, endogenous peptides from cells associate with MHC Class I molecules and produce cellular activities that include cytotoxic T lymphocytes (CTL) and Delayed Type Hypersensitivity (DTH) T-cells. There are important exceptions to these mechanisms. For example, many CTLs reactive with exogenous peptides have been described, and it is possible to generate CTLs to specific peptides that have been added to *in vitro* cultures of immune cells.

Other factors can determine the types of immune responses that are generated. For example, the nature of peptide association with MHC (either Class I or Class II) is an important factor that influences types of immune responses. In the case of Class I MHC molecules, there are specific binding motifs for peptide association (Rammensee et al, Ann. Rev. Imm. 11: 213, 1993). Binding motifs have been established for H-2 K^d, K^k, D^d, and other murine and human MHC. There are also parameters of peptide sequence that determine affinity for class II MHC. Thus, the types of peptides to which an individual can mount an immune system response are in part determined by the immunogenetic genotype and phenotype, which establish the shape and structure of the MHC

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molecules expressed by that individual.

In summary, the types of immune response that are generated in an organism in response to antigenic challenge is the result of a myriad of contributing factors, including: the immunogenetic background of the individual, prior sensitization to antigens, the route and form of antigen exposure, age and gender of the organism, and other factors. Almost all acquired immune responses that involve specific T-cell recognition are directed toward small peptides bound to the peptide binding groove of MHC molecules, the obvious exception being the response to superantigens. Cellular immune reaction (T-helper reaction, CTL, DTH) to peptides bound to MHC are usually generated through presentation of the antigen to T cells by antigen-presenting cells (APCs).

Tumor Vaccines. Cancer cells express aberrant molecules known as tumor-associated antigens. The immune system has the potential to recognize such structures as "foreign" and to mount specific immune responses against them, so as to reject tumor cells in much the same way that an allograft is rejected. This provides the basis for interest in the development of active specific immunotherapeutic (ASI) agents (cancer "vaccines") based on cancer-associated antigens.

Early studies on rodent tumors induced by chemical carcinogens, ultraviolet radiation, or viruses showed induction of immunological rejection of secondary tumor challenge. Subsequent studies on spontaneous tumors showed that these animals were incapable of inducing immune-mediated rejection of the tumor. Although a large number of human tumor-associated antigens have been characterized, most of these are also expressed by some normal cells. Therefore, immunological tolerance to such molecules makes it difficult to stimulate responses against such antigens. Moreover, it is a concern that induction of strong immune responses

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against self molecules may result in the development of autoimmune disorders. Since tumor-specific antigens are seldom detected in spontaneous cancers, approaches to develop active specific immunotherapy for common cancers, based on tumor-associated antigens, have been viewed with pessimism.

Nonetheless, interest in tumor immunology and the development of ASI in particular has persisted. There are at least four reasons for the current interest in ASI approaches. First, cell-mediated immune responses have been recognized as the key factor in immunological rejection of cancer. T cells recognize processed peptides in association with major histocompatibility complex (MHC) molecules, so intracellular proteins can give rise to peptide targets for cell-mediated responses. Further, since antigen processing and presentation are critical steps in T cell recognition, cancer-associated alterations (in its post-translational processing or levels of expression) of a self protein may result in presentation of novel peptide fragments on cancer cells. Secondly, tumor specific point mutations in certain genes have been characterized in several animal and human cancers. Some of these mutations generate novel peptide fragments that bind MHC molecules resulting in the production of new epitopes for recognition by T cells. This process allows for the induction of specific immune responses against cancer cells carrying such mutations. Third, manipulation of immune responses using cytokines, mutated antigens, and other means have sometimes resulted in tumor rejection even in cases of tumors that express weakly immunogenic antigens. Fourth, some individuals with severe immunodeficiencies have a higher incidence of tumors than the normal population, suggesting that the immune system plays an important role in eliminating some tumors.

Various methods have been utilized for stimulating general immune responses, especially for non-

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antigenic or weakly antigenic substances of interest. For example, adjuvants, such as complete Freund's and Ribi's, have long been used for this purpose. These adjuvants comprise oily solutions containing components, such as lipopolysaccharides that stimulate generalized immune responses. It is believed that the oils surround a water-soluble antigen, such as a peptide, thereby protecting it from degradation in the body and facilitating phagocytosis and passage through cell membranes of antigen presenting cells.

Another approach to stimulating the immunogenicity of a weakly-antigenic peptide or protein has been to couple the weak antigen to a carrier protein that is known to be a good immunogen. Common carrier proteins include keyhole limpet hemocyanin, fowl gamma-globulin and bovine serum albumin. Alternatively, the immunogenicity of a weak antigen may be enhanced by polymerizing it into large aggregates by way of cross-linking agents, such as glutaraldehyde. Both these methods rest on the notion that a weak antigen coupled to a strong antigen will enhance the generalized immune response. In a similar method, solid-phase resins and peptide synthetic methods may be employed to synthesize a peptide repeatedly, to form a highly-branched complex. Again, the basis for this approach is to present the antigen in very unusual (and very "non-self") context to the immune system, to stimulate antibody production.

In yet another approach, a weakly antigenic protein or peptide is attached to a solid particle such as a latex bead or resin. The purpose of this approach is to enhance phagocytosis of the antigen by macrophages. Additionally, peptides and proteins have been encapsulated in liposomes to enhance passage through membranes of antigen presenting cells, to enhance phagocytosis and to stimulate generalized immune responses because of the "non-self" characteristics of the liposome carrier.

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5 The approaches described above have met with
varying degrees of success in stimulating the
immunogenicity of weakly antigenic or non-antigenic
substances. However, they provide only a generalized
stimulation of immunity, and are not designed to target
10 specific populations of immune system cells (such as
antigen presenting cells). A desired objective in
effecting therapeutic intervention in various disease
states is to provide a means for specifically targeting a
protein or peptide to a population of antigen-presenting
15 cells and thereby stimulate those cells to internalize
the antigen of interest and present it to the immune
system in an effective, specific context. Insofar as it
is known, such a system is not currently available.

20 **SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION**

 The present invention provides novel
compositions and methods for delivering specific antigens
to antigen-presenting cells, and simultaneously
delivering signals to those cells that produce a desired
25 immune response. The compositions of the invention are
sometimes referred to herein as "APC-targeted activating
antigens."

 According to one aspect of the invention, these
APC-targeted activating antigens, which elicit an immune
30 response mediated by an antigen-presenting cell, comprise
at least one antigenic moiety functionally linked to at
least one targeting moiety that binds specifically to a
characteristic determinant on the antigen-presenting
cell. For purposes of the present invention, the term
35 "functionally linked" is defined generally as linking of
the moieties in such a way that each moiety retains its
intended function. This is particularly relevant with
respect to the targeting moiety, which is designed to
bind to a characteristic determinant on the antigen-
40 presenting cell.

8D Antigen-presenting cells contemplated for

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5 targ ting according to the pres nt invention include, but
 are not limited to, monocytes, dendritic cells,
 macrophages, B cells and some T cells. In preferred
 embodiments of the invention, the characteristic
 10 determinant on the selected APC is a cell surface
 receptor and the targeting moiety of the APC-targeted
 antigen is a ligand that binds to the receptor. It is
 particularly preferred that the cell surface receptor be
 an immunomodulatory receptor. Suitable cell surface
 15 receptors include, but are not limited to, C5a receptor,
 IFN γ receptor, CD21 (C3d ^{receptor} ~~receptor~~), CD64 (Fc γ RI ^{receptor} ~~receptor~~),
~~receptor~~, and CD23 (Fc ϵ RII) ^{receptor} ~~receptor~~.

One exemplary APC-targeted antigen of the
 invention is designed to bind to the C5a receptor, and
 15 the targeting moiety is a C5a receptor ligand, which is
 preferably a peptide analog of C5a corresponding to the
 C-terminal 10 residues of C5a. Another exemplary
 composition of the present invention is designed to bind
 to the IFN γ receptor, and comprises a targeting moiety
 20 which is a IFN γ receptor ligand, preferably a peptide
 analog of IFN γ corresponding to the N-terminal 39
 residues of IFN γ .

The antigenic moiety of the APC-targeted
 antigens of the invention can comprise essentially any
 25 antigenic substance, including, but not limited to,
 peptides and proteins, glycopeptides and glycoproteins,
 phosphopeptides and phosphoproteins, lipopeptides and
 lipoproteins, carbohydrates, nucleic acids and lipids.
 The APC-targeted antigens can comprise more than one
 30 antigenic moiety, and likewise can comprise more than one
 targeting moiety. Moreover, these moieties can be
 functionally linked in several fashions. For instance,
 if "T" represents a targeting moiety, and "Ag" represents
 an antigenic moiety, the APC-targeted antigens of the
 35 present invention may be oriented as follows:

Ag - T;

T - Ag;

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 $T_1 - Ag - T_2;$

$T_1 - [Ag]_n - T_2$ (wherein $[Ag]_n$ represents a multiplicity of antigens.

5 Examples of the general formulas set forth above include:

Ag - C5a agonist peptide;

IFN γ peptide - Ag;

IFN γ peptide - $[Ag]_n$ - C5a agonist peptide.

10 According to other aspects of the present invention, methods are provided for using the APC-targeted antigens of the invention. These include methods of activating an antigen-presenting cell with a targeting ligand and methods of eliciting an antigen
15 presenting cell-mediated immune response in a subject in which such a response is desired. General methods of immunizing or vaccinating a patient requiring such treatment, methods of treating a tumor, and methods for producing antibodies specific for a pre-determined
20 antigen for use as research tools or for diagnostic purposes are also contemplated to be within the scope of the present invention.

The numerous features and advantages of the compositions and methods of the present invention are
25 described more fully in the detailed description set forth below.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Figure 1 is a graph illustrating the antibody titer
30 produced in mice immunized with the indicated peptide constructs, as determined by radioimmunoassay, and shows the relationship between the amount of 125 I-goat anti-mouse antibody bound vs. the dilution factor of mouse sera which had been incubated in microtiter wells coated with
35 the MUC1 epitope peptide.

Figure 2 is a graph illustrating the increase in

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5 antibody titer in the sera of mice collected either
before (pre) or after immunization with peptides 3
(YKQGGFLGLYSFKPMPLaR) (SEQ ID NO:2) and 4 (SEQ ID NO:2)
(YSFKPMPLaRKQGGFLGL) (SEQ ID NO:5) as determined by
radioimmunoassay and shows the relationship between the
10 amount of ¹²⁵I-goat anti-mouse antibody bound and the
dilution factor of mouse sera which had been incubated in
microtiter wells coated with MUC1 epitope peptide. Note
that peptides 3 and 4 comprise two moieties, a targeting
ligand and an antigen to which an immune response is desired.

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Figure 3 is a graph illustrating the titers of
antibody classes and subclasses produced in mice
following immunization with peptide 3
(YKQGGFLGLYSFKPMPLaR) (SEQ ID NO:2) as determined by
20 ELISA using rabbit anti-mouse IgA, IgG1, IgG2a, IgG2b,
IgG3, and IgM, followed by goat anti-rabbit conjugated to
peroxidase and detected using p-nitrophenyl phosphate
cleavage monitored at 405 nm.

25 Figure 4 is a graph illustrating the specificity of
binding of the antibody subclasses in sera from mice
immunized with peptide 3 (YKQGGFLGLYSFKPMPLaR) (SEQ ID
NO:2) as determined by ELISA using binding to microtiter
wells coated with MUC1 epitope peptide and detection with
30 rabbit anti-mouse IgG2a, IgG2b, or IgM followed by
incubation with goat anti-rabbit conjugated to peroxidase
and detected using p-nitrophenyl phosphate cleavage
monitored at 405 nm.

35 DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

A major obstacle in the development of vaccines
and other immunostimulatory agents is the inability of
some antigens to be readily taken up and processed by
antigen presenting cells. Uptake of antigens by APCs is
40 an essential step for stimulating an effective immune
response, since the immune system recognizes the antigen

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only after it has been processed by the APC and presented on the surface of the APC in conjunction with the major histocompatibility complex (MHC).

It is known that APCs, including dendritic cells, monocytes, macrophages and B cells, possess functional receptors for numerous molecules that modulate the immune response. It has now been discovered in accordance with the present invention that ligands which bind to these receptors can be conjugated to weakly immunogenic antigens for example, as a way of delivering antigens to the antigen presenting pathway of the APC and simultaneously activating the antigen presenting capacity of the APC. Thus, these conjugates bind to a receptor on the APC surface, transduce a biological signal, and are internalized by the APC. The antigenic moiety of the conjugate is thereby delivered to the antigen presenting pathway of the APC along with the simultaneous activation of the APC.

The above-described conjugates are sometimes referred to herein as "molecular adjuvants" or "APC-targeted activating antigens." The APC-targeted activating antigens of the invention are designed to elicit immune responses mediated by one or more types of antigen presenting cells. Accordingly, an APC-targeted activating antigen comprises at least one antigenic moiety linked to a targeting and activating moiety that binds specifically to at least one characteristic determinant on the selected antigen presenting cell type. This binding is followed by internalization of the APC-targeted antigen and results in presentation of the antigen moiety on the surface of the APC. For purposes of the present invention, the term "antigenic moiety" may refer to any substance to which it is desired that an immune response be produced. The selected antigenic moiety may or may not be capable of eliciting an immune response by conventional means.

The term "determinant" is used herein in its

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broad sense to denote an element that identifies or determines the nature of something. When used in reference to an antigen presenting cell, "determinant" means that site on the antigen presenting cell which is involved in specific binding by the targeting ligand moiety of the molecular adjuvant of the invention.

The expression "characteristic determinant" as used herein, signifies an epitope (or group of epitopes) that serves to identify a particular population of antigen presenting cells and distinguish it from other antigen presenting cell populations. Cell-associated determinants include, for example, components of the cell membrane, such as membrane-bound proteins or glycoproteins, including cell surface antigens, histocompatibility antigens or membrane receptors.

The expression "specific binding", as used herein refers to the interaction between the targeting ligand moiety and a characteristic determinant on the antigen presenting cell population sought to be activated in accordance with this invention, to the substantial exclusion of determinants present on other cells.

Certain exemplary compositions of the invention have been synthesized, and have been shown to elicit APC-mediated immune responses in accordance with the mechanisms described above. For example, antigenic epitopes have been conjugated to the amino-terminal end of a C5a decapeptide agonist capable of binding to C5a receptors present on the surface of many APCs. Mice that were inoculated with an epitope of human MUC1 (a cell surface-associated mucin) conjugated to such a C5a agonist exhibited pronounced antibody titers against the MUC1 epitope, including high titers of specific antibodies with isotypes IgG2a and IgG2b. Mice that were inoculated with (1) MUC1 epitope alone, (2) C5a agonist alone, (3) unconjugated MUC1 epitope and C5a agonist together, or (4) C5a agonist conjugated to MUC1 epitope in a manner in which the biological activity of the C5a

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moiety was blocked, did not express a significant specific immune response. These results are described in greater detail in Example 1. Similar results were observed with conjugates of C5a agonist to a 12 kDa polypeptide, serum amyloid A (SAA), as described in greater detail in Example 2. These data tend to demonstrate the feasibility of the invention, which is to use receptor-binding ligands as a way to deliver antigens to APCs, with the simultaneous activation of APCs by the ligand moiety.

As described in greater detail below, the C5a receptor is only one of many receptors expressed on APCs. This invention encompasses the use of various ligands with selectivity to other receptors that mediate signal transduction events in the APCs, to be used alone or in conjunction with C5a agonists to influence the nature of immune response generated, i.e., humoral, cellular, Th1, Th2, and the like. Vaccines and other immunotherapeutic agents can be prepared with an array of such targeting moieties that serve to target the antigen moiety to a specific population of APCs and simultaneously activate these and other cells involved in various immune modulatory pathways.

The detailed description below sets forth preferred embodiments for making and using the targeted antigens of the present invention. To the extent that specific compounds and reagents are mentioned, these are for the purposes of illustration, and are not intended to limit the invention. Any biochemical, molecular or recombinant DNA techniques not specifically described are carried out by standard methods, as generally set forth for example, in Ausubel et al., "Current Protocols in Molecular Biology," John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1995.

I. Preparing APC-Targeted Activating Antigens
A. Selection of Components
Antigen presenting cells have various receptors

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on their surfaces for known ligands. Binding of ligands to these receptors results in signal transduction events that stimulate immune or tolerance responses. Many of these receptors are known to internalize and recycle in the cell. Others are suspected of doing the same. As such, these receptors are ideal targets for delivering antigens and activation signals simultaneously to APCs.

As discussed above, APCs include several cell types including macrophages, monocytes, dendritic cells, B cells, some T cells and other poorly characterized cell types. It is believed that these different classes of APCs can produce different types of immune responses. Accordingly, by targeting a receptor prevalent on a specific population of APCs, a particular desired immune response may be favored. An exemplary list of receptors contemplated for targeting in the present invention, and the rationale for their selection, is set forth below. These APC receptors are particularly appropriate for use in the present invention based on the following criteria: they are receptors expressed on APCs; the receptors are internalized upon binding of ligand; the receptors can transmit signals in the cells that influence antigen processing and presentation by these cells; some of the receptors are believed to be involved in signaling Th1 type cellular responses, whereas others are predicted to generate Th2 type humoral responses. The list set forth below is not exhaustive, but merely representative of the type of targeted receptors preferred in practicing the present invention. Other receptors, or other cell-surface characteristic determinants on antigen presenting cells may also be used as targets for the targeted antigens of the present invention. The receptor or other characteristic determinant need not be directly involved in the immune response.

CSa receptor. This receptor is preferred for use according to the present invention. It is present on PMNs, macrophages, dendritic cells, smooth muscle cells

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and some mast cells. A number of biological activities have been ascribed to C5a, mostly associated with inflammatory and immune responses. According to a preferred embodiment, this invention relies on the capability of C5a, as a targeting ligand, to specifically bind to its cognate receptor, so as to activate antigen presenting cells, including macrophages, monocytes and dendritic cells, through a G protein-mediated signal transduction pathway. Subsequent to signal transduction, the receptor/ligand complex is internalized. In the case of dendritic cells, C5a has been shown to induce a Th1 type response.

IFN γ receptor. The interferon γ receptor is expressed on macrophages, monocytes, dendritic cells, other APCs, some B cells, fibroblasts, epithelial cells, endothelium, and colon carcinoma cells. IFN γ binding to its receptor induces macrophage and dendritic cell activation, B cell differentiation, and expression of MHC class I and class II molecules in many cell types. The receptor is involved in signal transduction pathways. IFN γ is mainly produced in the body by activated T cells, particularly during the generation of Th1 type response. It is also produced by CD8+ cytotoxic T lymphocytes following recognition of antigen associated with MHC class I and by natural killer cells stimulated with TNF α and microbial products (Barclay et al. 1993,).

CD 21 (C3d receptor). CD 21 is the receptor for the C3d complement fragment. It is a receptor for the Epstein-Barr virus and may be an important interferon α receptor (Barclay et al., *supra*). CD 21 is expressed on B cells, follicular dendritic cells, other APCs, pharyngeal and cervical epithelial cells, and some thymocytes. It is involved in activation and proliferation of B cells through a signal transduction mechanism and it has been associated with increases in antigen presentation activities by those cells.

CD 64 (Fc γ RI rec ptor). CD 64 is a high

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affinity receptor for IgG, the only known receptor that binds monomeric IgG (Barclay et al, supra). This receptor is found on macrophages, monocytes and other immune cell populations treated with IFN γ . The IgG₁ binding site resides in the CH2 domain. IFN γ strongly upregulates expression of this receptor, which is the primary receptor involved in antibody-dependent cell mediated cytotoxicity reaction, and phagocytic activity by these cells.

10 CD 23 (Fc ϵ RII receptor). CD 23 is a low affinity receptor for IgE (not related to the high affinity IgE receptor found on basophils and mast cells). It is found on some B cell populations, macrophages, eosinophils, platelets, and dendritic cells (Barclay et al, supra). CD 23 mediates IgE dependent cell mediated cytotoxicity and phagocytosis by macrophages and eosinophils, and binding of IgE immunocomplexes increases the efficiency of antigen processing and presentation by some APCs, through a signal transduction mechanism that includes the p59 fyn tyrosine kinase. The ligand for CD 20 23 is the C ϵ 3 domain of IgE.

As mentioned above, the APC-targeted antigens of the present invention comprise at least one antigenic moiety and at least one targeting moiety. The targeting moiety can be derived from naturally-occurring ligands for a selected receptor on an APC, or analogs and derivatives of such ligands. For instance, the C5a receptor is a preferred receptor for use in practicing the present invention. Naturally-occurring C5a can be utilized as the targeting moiety in the APC targeted activating antigens of the invention. However, native C5a is not preferred for use as the targeting moiety as it induces a myriad of pro-inflammatory responses which may have undesirable side effects. In particularly preferred embodiments of the invention, C-terminal C5a agonist analogs capable of C5a receptor binding and signal transduction in a response selective manner are

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5 utilized. Such analogs are described in detail in
commonly-owned U.S. Application Serial No. 08/299,285,
the entire disclosure of which is incorporated by
reference herein.

10 An exemplary C5a C-terminal decapeptide agonist
preferred for use in the present invention is:

YSFKPMPLaR (SEQ ID NO:1)

15 This decapeptide is a potent agonist of naturally
occurring C5a, and is preferred to naturally occurring
C5a because its small size contributes to ease of
synthesis and solubility. Moreover, these
conformationally biased peptides are stable toward serum
carboxypeptidase digestion, express a level biological
selectivity, and have been shown to be non-toxic in high
concentrations in athymic mice.

20 Peptide analogs of naturally-occurring
interferon γ are also contemplated for use in the present
invention. Peptides corresponding to the amino terminal
39 amino acids of IFN γ have been shown to compete for
binding with native IFN γ . Antibodies against this domain
25 block biological activity, and removal of the first 10
amino terminal residues eliminates biological activity.
This suggests that binding of IFN γ to its cognate
receptor is mediated by this portion of the molecule.
Accordingly, peptides based on this domain are

30 contemplated to be of use for delivering antigens to APCs
expressing IFN γ receptors. In this regard, it should be
noted that human and mouse IFN γ are absolutely species
specific in binding and activity. Consequently, for
stimulating APC-mediated immune responses in mice, the
35 mouse peptides will be utilized, and the human peptide
will likewise be utilized for stimulating APC-mediated
immune responses in humans. The mouse IFN γ 39 amino acid
peptide analog is composed of the following sequence:

HGTVIESLES LN NYFNFFGIDVEE KSLFLDIWRNWQKDG (SEQ ID NO:3)

40 The human IFN γ 39 amino acid peptide analog is composed
of the following sequence:

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5 QDPYVKEAENLKKEYFNAGHSDVADNGTLFLGILKNWKEE (SEQ ID NO:4)

Another ligand contemplated for use in the present invention is the C3dG component of complement. This component is a 348 residue fragment derived by proteolytic cleavage from the C3b precursor (residue 955-1303 of C3; Swissprot accession p01024). C3dG can be converted to C3d (residues 1002-1303) and C3g (residues 955-1001). C3dG and C3d remain associated with non-activator surfaces and serve as opsonins for phagocytosis by macrophages and other antigen presenting cells. Cd 21 is the C3dG and C3d receptor.

The above-listed ligands exemplify the type of ligand preferred for practice of the present invention. However, it will be appreciated by those skilled in the art that other ligands may be utilized as the targeting moiety of the APC-targeted antigens of the invention. These include ligands that are already known in the art, as well as ligands that may be discovered and developed henceforth. Antibodies or antibody fragments also may be used to target APC-specific cell surface antigens.

The type of antigen that can be chosen as the antigenic moiety in the present invention can be any peptide, polypeptide or derivative thereof for which an immune response or antibody production is desired. These include but are not limited to, peptides, polypeptides (i.e. proteins) and derivatives thereof, such as glycopeptides, phosphopeptides and the like. Synthetic peptide and polypeptide derivatives or analogs, or any other similar compound that can be conjugated to a receptor-targeting moiety can be used in the present invention. Moreover, these peptides, proteins and derivatives may comprise single epitopes or multiple epitopes for generating different types of immune responses. Indeed, if an entire protein is conjugated to a targeting moiety, this protein is likely to comprise numerous epitopes, which may vary depending upon the solvent conditions and their effect on secondary and

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tertiary structure of the protein. Carbohydrates, nucleic acids and other non-protein substances also may be used as the antigenic moiety. Methods are available in the art for conjugating these substances to the peptide or protein targeting moiety.

In preferred embodiments of the invention, the antigenic moiety comprises agents that are weakly antigenic or non-antigenic under currently available immunization conditions. Many tumor-associated antigens fall into this category, because the antigens also are expressed by normal cells. Therefore, immunological tolerance to such molecules makes it difficult to stimulate responses against such antigens. Other proteins that fall into this category include naturally occurring proteins from one species (e.g., human) for which it would be desirable to produce antibodies in another species but which are recalcitrant to antibody generation in the other species.

One well-characterized tumor antigen is a cell surface-associated mucin that is highly overexpressed and differentially glycosylated by different adenocarcinomas, including breast, pancreas, lung and prostate carcinomas. Aberrant glycosylation of MUC1 by adenocarcinomas results in the addition of some blood group carbohydrate antigens to this core protein and the exposure of epitopes which have been detected by monoclonal antibodies on the core protein that are not exposed on forms of this protein produced by normal epithelial cells. A full-length cDNA sequence of human mucin-1 (MUC1) revealed an encoded protein with an average length of approximately 1200 amino acids (depending on the length of the tandem repeat allele) with several obvious domains: an amino terminal signal peptide; a large domain made up of multiple identical 20 amino acid tandem repeats flanked by several repeats that contain degenerate sequences; a hydrophobic-spanning domain of 31 amino acids; and a cytoplasmic domain of 69 amino acids at the carboxyl terminus. The

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5 most well-characterized tumor associated epitopes
described to date for MUC1 are found in the tandem repeat
domain. These include carbohydrate structures and
protein structures. MUC1 tumor associated epitopes are
well characterized, and thus have been proposed to be
10 used for the production of tumor vaccines using
conventional methods. Exemplary compositions of the
present invention comprise MUC1 epitopes, such as those
set forth below, as the antigenic moiety of the APC-1
targeted antigens of the invention, to demonstrate the
15 potential of the present invention as potent tumor
vaccines.

MUC1 epitope predicted to bind to class I
molecules of the H-2k^b type has sequence homology to the
juxtamembrane region of MUC1;

20 YKQGGFLGL (SEQ ID NO:6)

MUC1 tandem repeat has the sequence:

GVTSAPDTRRAPGSTAPPAH (SEQ ID NO:7)

25 The components comprising the APC-targeted
antigens of the invention can be made separately, then
conjugated. For example, a small peptide analog, such as
the above-described C5a agonists, may be produced by
peptide synthetic methods, and conjugated to a protein
which has been purified from naturally occurring
30 biological sources. Alternatively proteins engineered
for expression via recombinant methods may be used.
Additionally, targeted antigens comprising peptide
components (i.e., a peptide antigenic epitope conjugated
to a peptide receptor ligand) can be synthesized in
35 tandem by peptide synthetic chemistry according to known
methods and as described in greater detail below.
Finally, targeted antigens of the invention comprising
two larger polypeptide moieties (i.e., a large
polypeptide antigen linked to a large ligand) can be made
40 by recombinant techniques. For example, DNA molecules
encoding both components can be ligated together by

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recombinant means, then expressed as the conjugated fusion prot in. Methods of making these different types of compositions are set forth in greater detail below.

5 B. Peptides

 Oligopeptides required for the present invention may be prepared by various synthetic methods of peptide synthesis via condensation of one or more amino acid residues, in accordance with conventional peptide
10 synthesis methods. Preferably, peptides are synthesized according to standard solid-phase methodologies, such as may be performed on an Applied Biosystems Model 430A peptide synthesizer (Applied Biosystems, Foster City, CA), according to manufacturer's instructions. Other
15 methods of synthesizing peptides or peptidomimetics, either by solid phase methodologies or in liquid phase, are well known to those skilled in the art. When solid-phase synthesis is utilized, the C-terminal amino acid is linked to an insoluble resin support that can produce a
20 detachable bond by reacting with a carboxyl group in a C-terminal amino acid. One preferred insoluble resin support is *p*-hydroxymethylphenoxymethyl polystyrene (HMP) resin. Other useful resins include, but are not limited to: phenylacetamidomethyl (PAM) resins for synthesis of
25 some N-methyl-containing peptides (this resin is used with the Boc method of solid phase synthesis; and MBHA (*p*-methylbenzhydrylamine) resins for producing peptides having C-terminal amide groups.

 During the course of peptide synthesis, branched
30 chain amino and carboxyl groups may be protected/deprotected as needed, using commonly-known protecting groups. In a preferred embodiment, N^α-amino groups are protected with the base-labile 9-fluorenylmethyloxycarbonyl (Fmoc) group or *t*-
35 butyloxycarbonyl (Boc groups). Side-chain functional groups consistent with Fmoc synthesis may be prot cted with the indicat d protecting groups as follows:

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arginine (2,2,5,7,8-pentamethylchroman-6-sulfonyl);
asparagine (O-t-butyl ester); cysteine glutamine and
histidine (trityl); lysine (t-butyloxycarbonyl); serine
and tyrosine (t-butyl). Modification utilizing
5 alternative protecting groups for peptides and peptide
derivatives will be apparent to those of skill in the
art.

C. Proteins

10 Full-length proteins for use in the present
invention may be prepared in a variety of ways, according
to known methods. Proteins may be purified from
appropriate sources, e.g., human or animal cultured cells
or tissues, by various methods such as gel filtration,
15 ion exchange chromatography, reverse-phase HPLC and
immunoaffinity purification, among others. However, due
to the often limited amount of a protein present in a
sample at any given time, conventional purification
techniques are not preferred in the present invention.

20 The availability of nucleic acids molecules
encoding a protein enables production of the protein
using *in vitro* expression methods known in the art. For
example, a cDNA or gene may be cloned into an appropriate
in vitro transcription vector, such as pSP64 or pSP65 for
25 *in vitro* transcription, followed by cell-free translation
in a suitable cell-free translation system, such as wheat
germ or rabbit reticulocytes. *In vitro* transcription and
translation systems are commercially available, e.g.,
from Promega Biotech, Madison, Wisconsin or BRL,
30 Rockville, Maryland.

Alternatively, according to a preferred
embodiment, a selected peptide or protein may be produced
by expression in a suitable procaryotic or eucaryotic
system. For example, a DNA molecule, encoding a peptide
35 or protein component of the invention, or an entire
composit targeted antigen of the invention, may be
ins rted into a plasmid vector adapted for expression in

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a bacterial cell, such as *E. coli*, or into a baculovirus vector for expression in an insect cell. Such vectors comprise the regulatory elements necessary for expression of the DNA in the host cell, positioned in such a manner as to permit expression of the DNA in the host cell. Such regulatory elements required for expression include promoter sequences, transcription initiation sequences and, optionally, enhancer sequences.

10 A peptide or protein produced by gene expression in a recombinant procaryotic or eucaryotic system may be purified according to methods known in the art. In a preferred embodiment, a commercially available expression/secretion system can be used, whereby the recombinant protein is expressed and thereafter secreted from the host cell, so as to be readily purified from the surrounding medium. If expression/secretion vectors are not used, an alternative approach involves purifying the recombinant protein by affinity separation, such as by immunological interaction with antibodies that bind specifically to the recombinant protein. Such methods are commonly used for isolating peptides and proteins.

D. Linking Separately-Made Proteins and/or Peptides

25 In an alternative embodiment, protein and/or peptide components of the invention are synthesized separately, then conjugated using standard methods known by those skilled in the art. For example, a synthetic peptide may be chemically coupled to a protein using *m*-maleimidobenzoyl-*N*-hydroxysuccinimide ester (MBF). This reagent cross-links amino- and carboxy-terminal thiol groups in the peptide with lysine side chains present in the protein. Alternatively, a synthetic peptide may be coupled to a protein using glutaraldehyde, a common cross-linking agent. Another method for chemically coupling a peptide to a protein is through the use of carbodiimide and 1-(3-dimethylaminopropyl)-3-

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5 ethylcarbodiimide methiodide (EDC). As described in
greater detail in Example 2, this method was used to
conjugate a C5a C-terminal decapeptide analog to serum
amyloid A (SAA). Methods for joining two proteins
together are also available.

10 The peptides or proteins of the invention,
prepared by the aforementioned methods, may be analyzed
according to standard procedures. For example, they may
be subjected to amino acid sequence analysis, mass
spectra analysis or amino acid compositional analysis
15 according to known methods.

**E. General Formulae and Exemplary
Compositions of the Invention**

20 The APC-targeted antigens of the invention can
comprise one or more antigenic moieties, and likewise can
comprise one or more targeting moieties. Moreover, these
moieties can be functionally linked in several ways. For
instance, if "T" represents a targeting moiety, and "Ag"
represents an antigenic moiety, the APC-targeted antigens
25 of the present invention may be organized as follows:

- Ag - T;
- T - Ag;
- T₁ - Ag - T₂;
- T₁ - [Ag]_n - T₂ (wherein [Ag]_n represents a
30 multiplicity of antigens.

Examples of the general formulas set forth
above include:

- Ag - C5a agonist peptide;
- IFN γ peptide - Ag;
- 35 IFN γ peptide - [Ag]_n - C5a agonist peptide.

Other representative compositions of the invention
include:

- MUC1 Class I binding epitope - C5a agonist C-
terminal peptide
- 40 Murine or human IFN γ peptide - MUC1 Class I binding
epitope

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5 Murine or human IFN γ peptide - MUC1 tandem repeat
MUC1 Class I epitope - -C3dG peptide
SAA-K-Ahx - C5a C-terminal peptide (Ahx = ϵ amino
hexanoic acid).

10 It will be appreciated by persons skilled in
the art that the APC-targeted activating antigens of the
invention may be adapted for inclusion of large or
complex antigens. This may be accomplished, for example,
by inclusion of a "spacer" (such as the K-Ahx spacer
moiety in the exemplary compound above) between the
15 antigen and the targeting moiety. Such chemical
modifications are familiar to biochemists.

II. Uses of APC-Targeted Activating Antigens

20 The APC-targeted activating antigens of the
present invention have broad potential for clinical
applications in humans and animals. As discussed above,
a significant impediment to the development of vaccines
and other immunotherapeutic agents is the apparent
inability of particular antigens to be readily taken up
25 and processed by antigen presenting cells. The
compositions of the invention facilitate the specific
delivery of an antigen to a population of antigen
presenting cells, whereupon the delivery mechanism (e.g.,
using as the targeting moiety a receptor ligand capable
30 of transducing a biological signal) simultaneously
activates the antigen presenting pathway. of the APC.
Thus, the present invention enables development of
vaccines and other immunotherapeutics that can
specifically target any peptide antigen or other
35 antigenic structure covalently attached to a ligand for a
receptor present on an antigen presenting cell. It is
believed that antigens linked to ligands that selectivity
bind to and activate a particular population of APCs can
not only generate an immune response, but can influence
40 the nature of the immune response that is generated.
Thus, immune responses that favor antibody, cellular, Th1

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or Th2 responses, respectively, may be selectively generated. Vaccines may also be developed with an array of such targeting moieties thereby serving to target a selected antigen or antigens to several populations of APCs and simultaneously activate these and other cells involved in various immune modulatory pathways.

The ability to generate either antibody or cell mediated immune responses against different specific antigens has broad general applicability, and it is anticipated that the APC-targeted antigens of the invention will be extremely useful for these purposes. For example, antibody responses have been shown to be capable of protecting against different viral or bacterial infection, and antibodies are known to inactivate different toxins or toxic compounds that may affect the well being of humans or animals. Different cell mediated immune responses can provide protection against viral or other intracellular pathogens, and can play a role in some anti-tumor responses. It is believed that different antigen presenting cells and the context in which these cells are stimulated to present antigen (co-stimulation mediated by different ligand-receptor interactions) are important factors determining the nature of the above responses.

The targeted antigens of the present invention should find particular utility in the development of active specific immunotherapeutic agents (i.e., cancer "vaccines") based on cancer-associated antigens. For example, it has been hypothesized that induction of strong cell-mediated immune responses (involving Th1 cells and/or cytotoxic T lymphocytes) would provide the most effective protection against various forms of cancer. A vaccination strategy utilizing the APC-targeted antigens of the invention can be designed to induce this type of response. In this regard, it is known that stimulation with some cytokin s (IL-12, IFN γ) can induce predominantly Th1 type responses over Th2 type

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5 responses for certain antigens.

As a step toward developing anti-cancer vaccines for clinical use, the compositions of the invention can be used to advantage as research tools to further explore the effect of stimulating a certain
10 population of APCs with a tumor antigen and determining the effect on an anti-tumor immune response. To this end, it should be noted that the present application exemplifies targeted antigens comprising an epitope of a particular tumor-specific antigen, Mucin-1.

15 Previous tumor vaccine formulations that aim to immunize patients with compounds that are identical to compounds already produced by tumors have proven to be of limited value, probably because tumors that progress have been selected for their lack of immunogenicity in their
20 respective host (e.g., the host is tolerant to existing tumor antigens). Thus, one important challenge of producing effective tumor vaccines is generating reagents that counteract immunological tolerance to tumor-associated antigens. One purpose of the APC-targeted
25 antigens described above is to induce in the immunized individual a response against their tumor that is similar to that seen in individuals undergoing allograft rejection. In other words, the goal is to induce an autoimmune reaction against the tumor that is capable of
30 destroying the tumor. The immunological parameters that regulate tolerance to tumor antigens are not well understood; nonetheless the compositions described herein have the potential to counteract this tolerance and thus induce specific immune responses that mediate tumor
35 rejection.

The targeted antigens of the present invention will also find broad utility in the production of antibodies for use as immunodiagnostic and immunotherapeutic agents. For immunodiagnostic purposes,
40 antibodies are widely used in various quantitative and qualitative assays for the detection and measurement of

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5 biological molecules associated with diseases or other
pathological conditions. For reasons that often are not
well understood, it is sometimes difficult to generate
antibodies against certain biological molecules using
conventional means. The compositions of the present
10 invention provide an alternative means for inducing an
animal to produce antibodies against a weakly-antigenic
or non-antigenic substances. The utility of the
compositions of the invention in this regard is shown
clearly in Example 2, below, in connection with serum
15 amyloid A. The appearance and abundance of this protein
in the body is strongly correlated with systemic
inflammatory stress, which is a condition that is very
difficult to quantitate. It is believed that
quantitative assays for SAA levels would be an excellent
20 indicator of general, systemic inflammation; therefore it
would be of benefit to generate antibodies against the
protein in a non-human species. This protein has proved
particularly recalcitrant to the generation of antibodies
using conventional measures. As described in Example 2,
25 a targeted antigen comprising SAA conjugated to a C5a
peptide ligand produced a significant antibody response
in mice injected with the conjugated molecule. In a
similar fashion, targeted antigens comprising any weakly-
antigenic or non-antigenic component of interest could be
30 made and used to produce specific antibodies in
laboratory animals, for use as immunodiagnostic reagents.

Antibodies for use as immunotherapeutic agents
can also be generated using the compositions of the
invention. As one example, there has been a great deal
35 of recent interest in developing reagents capable of
down-regulating or inhibiting the complement cascade to
modulate local and systemic inflammatory responses. To
this end, the C3a convertase, which is active early in
the cascade, could provide an ideal target for complement
40 inhibition. C3a convertase cleaves the peptide C3 into
two components, C3a and C3b, and therefore must be able

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5 to access the cleavage site on C3 in order to accomplish
the result. Antibodies directed toward the C3a-C3b
cleavage site are expected to be effective in blocking
access of C3a convertase to the cleavage site, thereby
inhibiting this early step in the complement cascade.
10 Such antibodies may be generated using a targeted antigen
of the invention comprising, as the antigenic moiety, the
short peptide sequence comprising the C3a/C3b cleavage
site. The sequence could then be conjugated to an
appropriate targeting moiety, such as the C5a C-terminal
15 decapeptide agonists exemplified herein. Thus, the
compositions would be useful to generate an
immunotherapeutic agent (e.g., an antibody that blocks
the activity of C3a convertase) for treating an adverse
inflammatory condition.

20 The following examples are provided to describe
the invention in further detail. These examples are
intended to illustrate the invention in greater detail.
They are not intended to limit the invention in any way.

25 **EXAMPLE 1**
Evaluation of Mucin Epitope (MUC1/C5a agonist) Conjugate
for Recruitment and Activation of Antigen Presenting
Cells (APCs) and Stimulation of an Immune Response in
Mice

30 The C5a receptor is present on numerous antigen
presenting cells, including monocytes, macrophages,
dendritic cells, and other cell types. In this example,
a composite peptide comprising a mucin epitope (MUC1)
functionally linked to a ^{decapeptide} ~~decapeptide~~ agonist analog of C5a
35 corresponding to the C-terminal effector region of the
natural factor was evaluated for its ability to activate
the APCs thereby stimulating an immune response in mice.
This evaluation is based on the known property of C5a
receptors to internalize and recycle in the antigen
40 presenting cell, thereby acting as ideal candidates for
delivering antigens to and simultaneously activating

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5 signals in the APCs. Because C5a receptors are particularly common on macrophages, monocytes and dendritic cells, it is believed that the use of a C5a agonist analog to bind C5a receptors will result in preferential activation of these APCs.

10

i. **Abbreviations.** Except where noted, the single letter designation for the amino acid residues is used: alanine is A; arginine is R; asparagine is N; aspartic acid is D; cystine is C; glutamine is Q; glutamic acid is
15 E; glycine is G; histidine is H; isoleucine is I; leucine is L; lysine is K; methionine is M; phenylalanine is F; proline is P; serine is S; threonine is T; tryptophan is W; tyrosine is Y; and valine is V. Upper case letters represent the L-amino acid isomer and lower case the D-isomer.
20

ii. **Peptide synthesis, Purification and Characterization.** The following peptides were synthesized according to standard solid-phase methodologies on an Applied Biosystems (Foster City, CA)
25 model 430 A peptide synthesizer and characterized as previously described (7):

(1) The antigenic "juxta-membrane" (JM) epitope of the human mucin-1 (MUC1), YKQGGFLGL (SEQ ID NO:6);

(2) The C5a C-terminal decapeptide agonist analog,
30 YSFKPMPLaR (SEQ ID NO:1);

(3) The composite peptide YKQGGFLGLYSFKPMPLaR (SEQ ID NO:2), in which the JM epitope is positioned toward the amino terminus and the C5a peptide is positioned toward the carboxyl terminus; and

35 (4) The composite peptide YSFKPMPLaRKQGGFLGL (SEQ ID NO:5), in which the JM epitope of MUC1 is positioned toward the carboxyl terminus and the C5a analog is positioned toward the amino terminus.

Peptide 3 retains C5a biological activity,
40 whereas peptide 4 does not because the biologically important carboxyl terminal end of the C5a analog is

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blocked by the presence of the mucin epitope. As such, peptide 4 serves as a control to determine the importance of the C5a biological activity to the effectiveness of these peptides for immunization purposes.

5 Syntheses were performed on a 0.25 mmol scale on 0-hydroxymethylphenoxymethyl polystyrene (HMP) resins (0.88 meq/g substitution). N^α-amino groups were protected with the base-labile 9-fluorenylmethyloxycarbonyl (Fmoc) group. Side-chain functional groups were protected as
10 follows: Arg (Pmc or 2,2,5,7,8-pentamethylchroman-6-sulfonyl); Asp (Ot-butyl ester); Cys, Gln & His (Trt or trityl); Lys (Boc or t-butyloxycarbonyl); Ser & Tyr (t-butyl). Synthesis was initiated by the *in situ* coupling of the C-terminal residue (N^α-Fmoc-L-Arg(Pmc)) to the HMP
15 resin in the presence of excess N-N'-dicyclohexylcarbodiimide (DCC) and 1-hydroxybenzotriazole (HOBT) with 4-dimethylaminopyridine (DMAP) as a coupling catalyst. Peptide chain elongation was accomplished by repetitive Fmoc deprotection in 50% piperidine in NMP
20 followed by residue coupling in the presence of 2-(1H-benzotriazol-1-yl)-1,1,3,3-tetramethyluronium hexafluorophosphate (HBTU).

Side-chain deprotection and cleavage from the resin were achieved in a single step acetolysis reaction
25 by stirring the peptide-resin in a solution of 84% trifluoroacetic acid (TFA), 6% phenol, 2% ethanedithiol, 4% thioanisole, and 4% water for 1.5 hr at room temperature. Free peptide was precipitated from this solution by adding cold diethyl ether. The mixture was
30 filtered through a sintered glass Buchner funnel (medium porosity) and the peptide/resin washed twice with cold ether to remove the thiol scavenger. The peptide was extracted by swirling the peptide/resin in the funnel with 20-30 ml aliquots of 10% acetic acid followed by
35 filtration. The extraction aliquots were combined, frozen, and lyophilized to yield the powdered form of the crude peptide.

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Peptides were purified by preparative and analytical reverse-phase HPLC on columns packed with C₁₈-bonded silica. The details of this procedure have been described by (4). All peptides were characterized by amino acid compositional analysis and fast atom bombardment mass spectrometry (FAB-MS).

iii. Animal Models. The strains of mice used for this example were inbred females 6 to 12 week old C57B16(H-2^b) and Balb/c (H-2^d), which were obtained from Jackson labs (Bar Harbor, Maine). These two strains which differ in H-2 haplotypes, were used in this example to demonstrate that the observed antibody responses were not a result of the selection or creation of an unique immunogenic epitope characteristic of the sequence of the proteins of the MHC class I and class II molecules important for antigen processing in one mouse strain or another. The MUC1 peptide selected for these studies contained a motif that may bind to the H-2K^b molecule of the C57B16 mice; therefore, a strain of mouse that lacked this class I molecule binding motif (Balb/c) was also studied to determine the relative contribution of the class I binding motif to the antigen presentation properties of these peptides.

iv. Immunization protocol. Preimmune sera were obtained from mice, which were subsequently immunized intraperitoneally with 100 µg of the indicated peptide with RIBI adjuvant (MPL+TDM+CWS) (Sigma Immunochemicals). Animals were boosted twice at two week intervals using the same injection procedure. Sera were obtained following three immunizations (at 6 weeks).

v. Analysis of serum antibody responses. For radioimmunoassay (RIA), anti-peptide antibodies were determined, before and at different time points after immunization, in 96-well microtiter plates (Dynatech Laboratories, Inc.). Plates were coated with 50 µl of a 100 µg/ml appropriate peptide in phosphate-buffered saline (PBS) pH 7.4 solution overnight at 4°C. The wells

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5 were blocked by incubation with 5% dry milk in PBS pH 7.4
for at least two hours. Anti-peptide antibody titers
were determined using serial dilutions of sera. The sera
were diluted with PBS containing 0.05% Tween-20, pH 7.4
10 (washing buffer) and 50 μ l of each dilution was incubated
at 37°C for 1 hour. The wells were then drained, washed
4 times with PBS-Tween and 50 μ l of 125 I-goat anti-mouse Ab
(1 - 2 x 10⁴ cpm/well) was added and incubated for 1 hr at
25° C. After washing, specific radioactivity was recorded
15 in a gamma counter (1272 CliniGamma, LKB).

Anti-peptide antibody isotype titers were
determined by enzyme-linked immunosorbent assay (ELISA)
carried out in 96-well microtiter plates. The plates
were coated with 100 μ g/ml of appropriate peptide in PBS,
15 pH 7.4, and incubated overnight. The wells were blocked
with 5% dry milk in PBS pH 7.4 for at least two hours.
Anti-peptide titers were determined using serial
dilutions of sera as described above. After the plates
were washed 4 times, 50 μ l of a 1:100 dilution of rabbit
20 anti-mouse IgA, IgG1, IgG2a, IgG2b, IgG3 and IgM (Zymed)
was added to each well and incubated at 25°C for 1 hour.
The plates were washed 4 times with washing buffer and 50
 μ l of 1:500 goat anti-rabbit conjugated to peroxidase
(Zymed) was incubated at 37°C for 1 hour. Again, the
25 plates were washed 4 times with washing buffer and bound
enzyme was detected by the addition of 50 μ l 1 mg/ml p-
nitrophenyl phosphate (Sigma) in 10% diethanolamine
(Sigma) pH 9.4. The reaction was stopped by the addition
of 50 μ l of 0.5 M sodium hydroxide and absorbance values
30 (A_{405}) were determined on Titertek Multiskan (Flow
Laboratories, Irvine, Scotland).

vi. **Experimental groups.** Experimental groups were
as follows:

- 35 Group A. mice immunized with peptide (1)
 Group B. mice immunized with peptide (2)
 Group C. mice immunized with peptide (1) plus
 peptide (2)

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- 5 Group D. mice immunized with peptide (3)
 Group E. mice immunized with peptide (4).

10 The results of the experimental protocols are
 set forth in Figures 1 and 2. As can be seen in the
 Figures, the mice in Groups A, B, C and E produced no
 appreciable increase in antibody response to inoculation
 with MUC1 epitope (Group A), C5a agonist peptide (Group
 B), MUC1 epitope combined with, but not conjugated to,
 C5a agonist peptide (Group C), or MUC1 epitope conjugated
15 to the C5a agonist peptide at its C-terminus, rather than
 its N-terminus (thereby blocking C5a biological activity)
 (Group E). Only mice inoculated with the MUC1
 epitope/C5a agonist peptide conjugate of the present
 invention (Group D) generated an appreciable antibody
20 response. Furthermore, this stimulation was significant.
 It is clear from these results that inoculation with the
 conjugated MUC1 epitope/C5a agonist peptide was far more
 efficient in stimulating a general immune response (i.e.,
 production of antibodies) than was inoculation with
25 either peptide alone, or both peptides together, but not
 conjugated, or peptides conjugated in the opposite
 orientation.

 There are several significant conclusions that
 can be drawn based on these results. The fact that both
30 Balb/c and C57B16 mice showed antibody responses to
 peptide 3 suggests that the antigen presenting effect is
 not restricted by MHC haplotype. The fact that immune
 responses were not produced to peptide 4, or to mixtures
 of peptide 1 and 2, but that substantial responses were
35 produced to peptide 3, suggest that the effect is
 mediated by the C5a moiety of the peptide and that the
 immune response results from the simultaneous delivery of
 antigen peptide and C5a mediated activation signals to
 antigen presenting cells.

40 The isotypes of the anti-peptide antibodies
 produced in the immunized mice were determined (Figure 3)

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5 and were found to consist of IgM, IgG2a, and IgG2b. This
suggests that the immunogenic peptide is producing T
cell-dependent responses, which generally require antigen
processing and presentation. Data presented in Figure 4
10 show that the antibody response to peptide 3 includes a
high percentage of antibodies that are specific for the
MUC1 epitope that was the antigen moiety of these
studies.

15

EXAMPLE 2

Evaluation of Serum Amyloid A/C5a Peptide Conjugates for Recruitment and Activation of APCs and Stimulation of Immune Response in Rats

20 Serum amyloid A is an acute-phase stress
response protein generated by the liver. Along with
other acute phase proteins, SAA is secreted in response
to systemic inflammatory stress as a protective measure.
SAA is of interest because it appears to be an excellent
indicator of general, systemic inflammation, which is a
25 phenomenon that is very difficult to quantitate. Because
serum levels of SAA have been observed to parallel the
rise and fall of the systemic inflammatory response,
quantitation of serum levels of this peptide would
provide an effective means of assessing inflammation.
30 One way to accomplish this is to develop antibodies
against SAA that could be used for quantitation such as
in an ELISA assay. However, SAA has been particularly
recalcitrant to the generation of antibodies against it.
In this example, an evaluation was made of the ability of
35 SAA conjugated to a C5a C-terminal analog (as described
in Example 1) to activate antigen producing cells and
produce an antibody response in rats.

40 **i. Production and preparation of proteins and
peptides.** The C-terminal C5a analog K-Ahx-YSFKPMPLaR (SEQ ID
NO:8) (Ahx is aminohexanoic acid, which is a linear aliphatic

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5 spacer moiety) was produced as described in Example 1.
The aliphatic spacer moiety was included to separate the
critical receptor-binding C5a analog from the bulky
protein to be attached to the amino terminus.

10 Serum amyloid A was conjugated to the C5a
peptide analogs according to the following method. SAA
(100 μ g) was reacted with a 50-fold molar excess of a
water soluble carbodiimide, 1-(3-dimethylaminopropyl)-3-
ethylcarbodiimide methiodiide (EDC), in 200 μ l of
15 phosphate buffered saline, pH 7.5, at room temperature
for 30 minutes. A 50-fold molar excess of the peptide
(K-Ahx-YSFKPMPLaR) (SEQ ID NO:8) and a 100-fold molar
excess of a base diisopropylethyl amine (DIEA) were added
to this solution. Water was added to the solution to
20 bring the reaction mixture to a volume of 400 μ l. This
solution was stirred overnight at room temperature and
then lyophilized to a dry powder. The powder was diluted
to the appropriate volume with water to generate the
stock mixture used for inoculating the animals.

25 ii. Experimental protocols. Rats were injected
intraperitoneally with an inoculant comprising the
SAA/C5a peptide conjugates in phosphate-buffered saline
with or without RIBI adjuvant. Booster injections were
given two and five weeks after the initial injections.
30 The rats were sacrificed seven weeks after the initial
injection and anti-mucin antibody production was assessed
from the serum titers, as described in Example 1.

35 Significant anti-SAA antibody was produced from
both groups of rats, whether or not RIBI adjuvant was
included in the inoculation. As visualized by gel
electrophoresis and autoradiography of anti-SAA antibody
eluted from the plate assays, it appeared that anti-SAA
antibody titers were essentially equivalent, or slightly
40 higher, in rats inoculated with SAA/C5a peptide conjugate
in the absence of RIBI adjuvant as compared to the same

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5 inoculation without the adjuvant. Thus, antigenic
conjugates comprising the C5a peptide analog are useful
for generating antibodies against large proteins, as well
as against smaller peptide fragments, such as those
described in Example 1. Moreover, the successful
10 generation of anti-SAA antibodies utilizing this method
is particularly promising for purposes of producing
antibodies against weakly- or non-antigenic peptides or
proteins.

EXAMPLE 3

15 Production and Characterization of Site-Directed Neutralizing Antibodies Specific for a Peptide κ R(33-52) from the Predicted Amino-Terminal Region of the Human Kappa Receptor

Receptors for human opioid peptide hormones have
20 been described on numerous cell types. The receptors for
 μ , κ , and δ ligands have recently been cloned from
genomic and cDNA libraries derived from normal tissue and
cell lines. Considerable homology exists among the μ ,
 κ , and δ receptors, except for the N-terminal regions of
25 the receptors. The N terminal region of the human kappa
receptor (amino acid residues 1-100) is relatively
hydrophilic and would be predicted to be exposed on the
surface of the cell membrane. A 20 residue peptide
[κ R(33-52)], was chosen and used to raise a site directed
30 peptide specific polyclonal antibody (5).

The method of production of a polyclonal antiserum
in rabbits using the molecular adjuvant, C5a-agonist
peptide conjugated to the κ R epitope is set forth below.
The binding specificity and biological activities of the
35 resulting polyclonal antiserum raised to the predicted
extracellular region of the human kappa receptor (κ R) are
also described below.

i. Construction of Targeted-Immunogen. A peptide
construct consisting of the κ R(33-52)
40 (FPGWAEPDSNGSAGSEDAQL) (SEQ ID NO:9) covalently attached
to the N-terminal end of a conformationally biased, C5a

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5 complement fragment agonist analogue peptide (YSFKPMLaR)
(SEQ ID NO:1) was synthesized according to the methods in
Example 1 and as previously reported (7).

10 **ii. Preparation of anti-κR(33-52) Antiserum and
Peptide-Specific ELISA.** Rabbits were immunized s.c. with
500 μg of FPGWAEPD SNGSAGSEDAQLYSFKPMLaR construct (SEQ ID
NO:10) in complete Freund's adjuvant (GIBCO, Grand Island,
NY) on day 0 followed by booster injections on days 30 and
60 in incomplete Freund's adjuvant. Serum was collected
15 starting 75 days after the initial immunization.

The presence of anti-peptide antibody was determined
by using a peptide specific ELISA utilizing the free
κR(33-52) peptide as previously described (8). Anti-κR(33-
20 52) and normal rabbit γ-globulin (RGG) were purified by
protein A Sepharose chromatography (Sigma) (8) prior to
use.

25 **iii. Cells and culture conditions.** The
neuroblastoma cell SK-N-SH (HTB 11), ductal breast cell
carcinoma T47D (HTB 133), Jurkat T cell leukemia, (TIB
152), U937 histolytic lymphoma (CRL1593), THP 1 human
monocyte (TIB 202), EBV-transformed B cells SKW 6.4 (TIB
215) and CESS (TIB 190) (American Type Culture
Collection, Rockville, MD) were cultured in DMEM or RPMI
30 1640 supplemented with 10% fetal calf serum, 25 mM HEPES,
1 mM L-glutamine, 2 mM Na pyruvate, 50 U penicillin and
50 μg/ml streptomycin. The human neuronal precursor
cells NT2 (Stratagene, La Jolla, CA) were cultured in
Opti-MEM (Gibco) supplemented as above. All cultures
35 were incubated at 37° C in a humidified chamber with 7.5%
CO₂.

Peripheral blood derived mononuclear cells were
obtained from healthy male and female volunteers,
isolated by Ficoll-Hypaque(tm) density gradient
40 centrifugation and enriched for macrophage by adherence
to plastic.

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5 **iv. Flow Cytom try.** Single-color flow cytometry
analysis of cells (1×10^6) in PBS containing 1% bovine
calf serum and 0.1% sodium azide (staining buffer) were
preincubated 30 minutes at 4°C in the presence of 20%
10 normal human serum. The cells were washed and incubated
with anti- κR (33-52) or RGG for 30 minutes at 4°C , washed
and labeled with PI-conjugated donkey (Fab')₂ fragments
of antirabbit IgG (Zymed, S. San Francisco, CA) for 30
minutes at 4°C (8). For dual color analysis FITC-
15 conjugated anti-CD3 or anti-CD14 (Pharmingen, San Diego,
CA) were also included in the second step. Cells ($1 \times$
 10^6) were analyzed on a FACScan (Becton Dickinson,
Mountain View, CA) and data were analyzed with the Cell
Quest software as previously described (8).

20 **v. Measurement of cell proliferation.** Peripheral blood
mononuclear cell (PBMC) were pulsed on day 2 of culture
with ^3H -thymidine and 18 hours later the cells harvested
on glass fiber filters and processed for scintillation
counting. Experiments were performed three times and
25 each sample done in triplicate.

vi. Measurement of IgG Secretion. Relative IgG levels in
culture supernatants were determined by indirect ELISA as
previously described (9). Supernatants from PBMC cultures
30 were collected after 10 days and assayed for the presence of
IgG. Numbers represent the mean CPM \pm SD from triplicate
samples. Experiments were performed at least three times.

vii. Characterization of Anti- κR Peptide Antiserum. Serum
35 from rabbits immunized with the κR (33-52)YSFPMPLaR
construct (SEQ ID NO:10) and normal rabbit serum were
assayed for the ability to recognize plate bound κR (33-52)
(SEQ ID NO:9) in ELISA. The results show that serum from
rabbits immunized with the κR (33-52)YSFPMPLaR construct
40 (SEQ ID NO:10) bound free κR (33-52) peptide (SEQ ID NO:9)
in a dose dependent fashion. The titer was approximately

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5 10⁵. In contrast, serum from unimmunized rabbits failed to
bind this peptide. Serum samples from immunized and
unimmunized rabbits were subjected to protein A-Sepharose
chromatography and the column eluates were assessed for
10 κ R(33-52) (SEQ ID NO:9) specific antibody. The results
indicate that protein A-purified antibody derived from
rabbits immunized with the κ R(33-52)YSFPMPLaR construct
(SEQ ID NO:10) binding to free κ R(33-52) (SEQ ID NO:9) was
detectable at antibody concentrations less than 0.1 ng/ml.
In contrast, RGG failed to bind the free peptide. The
15 results from multiple bleedings indicated that the ED₅₀
titer ranged between 1-10 ng/ml. These results indicate
that rabbits immunized with κ R(33-52)YSFPMPLaR (SEQ ID
NO:10) contained high titer, κ R(33-52) peptide specific
antibody.

20

viii. Binding of anti-R (33-52) antibody to cells
expressing human κ R. To determine whether the polyclonal
anti- κ R(33-52) antibodies bound to cells expressing the
25 κ R, a variety of mononuclear cell lines and normal human
mononuclear cells were first assayed for the presence of
the κ receptor specific mRNA by RT-PCR. RNA samples
isolated from neuronal cell lines NT2, U937, Jurkat,
T47D, normal human PBMC, and enriched human macrophage
30 were subjected to RT-PCR analysis with 5' sense and 3'
antisense primers specific for the 3' region of the
cloned κ R and B-actin. All of the cell lines or cell
fractions, except for the T47D cell line, were positive
for the κ -receptor specific PCR product, as expected
35 based on the primer sequences used (5).

Experiments were performed to determine whether
anti- κ R(33-52) bound to cells expressing κ R specific
mRNA. The results of single color flow cytometric
analysis for several cell lines are shown in Table 2.
40 Flow cytometric measurements were conducted with human
cell lines representative of macrophage (U937), T

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lymphocytes (Jurkat), and B lymphocytes (SKW 6.4 and CESS). The results indicate that anti- κ R(33-52) bound all three cell types. Anti- κ R(33-52) bound to U937 cells to the greatest extent (MFI=231) compared to normal RGG (MFI=38). As used herein MFI refers to mean fluorescence intensity. Comparison of anti- κ R(33-52) and RGG binding to the Jurkat line indicated approximately a 3-fold shift in MFI (MFI=18 vs. MFI=6). Similar results were obtained with the two B lymphocyte-like cell lines (SKW 6.4 and CESS). Comparison of anti- κ R(33-52) and RGG binding to the SKW 6.4 line indicated approximately a 3-fold shift in MFI (MFI=19 vs. MFI=6). The neuronal cell line was also specifically bound by the anti- κ R(33-52) as indicated by a 3-fold shift in the MFI over the RGG. Finally, based on the lack of expression of κ R-specific mRNA from the human breast carcinoma cell line (T47D), this cell line was assessed for its ability to bind to anti- κ R(33-52) by flow cytometric analysis. The lack of a κ R expression on T47D cells was confirmed by the fact that anti- κ R(33-52) and RGG bound to these cells in an almost identical fashion. As a positive control, anti- κ R(33-52) and RGG were assessed for their ability to bind to an additional human macrophage-like cell line (THP 1). Comparison of anti- κ R(33-52) and RGG binding to this cell line resulted in a significant shift in MFI (MFI=190 vs. MFI=8). These results confirm the specificity of anti- κ R(33-52) for the human κ R.

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Table 1

Selected cell type binding of anti- κ R(33-52) antibodies produced in rabbits immunized with C5a-agonist peptide conjugated to the κ R(33-52) sequence as assessed by single channel color flow cytometric analysis.

		Mean Channel Intensity	
<u>Cell Line</u>	<u>Cell Type</u>	<u>RGG</u>	<u>anti-κR Ab</u>
NT2	Neuronal	9	19
15 U937	Macrophage	38	231
Jurkat	T-lymphocyte	6	18
20 SKW 6.4	B-lymphocyte	6	19
CESS	"	<10	>10
Controls			
25 T47D (negative)	Human Breast Carcinoma	~3	~3
THP1 (positive)	Macrophage	8	190

30

Analysis of intact human PBMC indicated that these cells express mRNA for a " κ -like" R (5). Dual color flow cytometric analysis was utilized to assay for the binding of anti- κ R(33-52) to normal human macrophage (CD14+) and T lymphocytes (CD3+). It was observed that both macrophage and T lymphocytes bound anti- κ R(33-52) antibody. Anti- κ R(33-52) and RGG were assessed for binding to CD14+ PBMC. The results indicate that anti- κ R(33-52) bound CD14+ cells with a 15-fold increase compared to normal RGG (MFI=320 vs. MFI=21). Anti- κ R(33-52) was also found to bind CD3+ cells (MFI=19 vs. RGG MFI=3) albeit less than CD14+ cells. These results indicate that anti- κ R(33-52) binds normal PBMC-derived mononuclear cells as well as mononuclear cell lines, which express κ R-specific mRNA.

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ix. Neutralization of U50,488H-mediated suppression of lymphocyte proliferation by anti- κ R(32-52) antibody in vitro. The results of published studies have shown that

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5 opioid peptide-induced regulation of *in vitro* immune
responses can occur via specific receptor-ligand
interactions. More specifically, it has been shown that
the κ R-selective agonist U50,488H is capable of
suppressing SAC-induced lymphocyte proliferation by human
10 PBMC cultures (6). The inhibition of lymphocyte
activation by U50,488H has also been shown to be reversed
by the κ R-selective antagonist nor-BNI. To determine
whether anti- κ R(33-52) was capable of acting as an κ R
selective antagonist and neutralizing U50,488H-mediated
15 suppression, PBMC cultures were preincubated with various
concentrations of protein A purified anti- κ R(32-52) prior
the addition of SAC and U50,488H. U50,488H suppresses
SAC-induced lymphocyte proliferation in a dose dependent
fashion (5). Maximal suppression was obtained when
20 U50,488H was used at a concentration of 10^{-6} M. PBMC
cultures were preincubated with various concentrations of
anti- κ R(33-52) (1-50 μ g/ml), followed by the addition of
U50,488H plus SAC, and proliferation measured on day 3 of
culture. Anti- κ R(33-55) was found to neutralize
25 U50,488H-mediated suppression of SAC-induced lymphocyte
proliferation in a dose dependent fashion. In contrast,
identical concentrations of normal RGG failed to inhibit
 κ R selective agonist mediated immunosuppression.

Since SAC has been shown to induce both T and B
30 lymphocyte proliferation, similar experiments were
conducted with the T cell mitogen PHA. Anti- κ R(33-52) was
also able to neutralize the ability of U50,488H to
suppress mitogen-induced T cell proliferation. U50,488H
(10^{-6} M) suppressed PHA-induced T cell proliferation by
35 85%. This suppression was reversed by preincubating the
cells with anti- κ R(33-52). Preincubation of PBMC with
normal RGG failed to block U50,488H-mediated suppression
of T cell proliferation.

Anti- κ R(33-52) does not appear to directly
40 modulate lymphocyte proliferation. The co-culture of PBMC
with anti- κ R(33-52), in the absence of mitogen, failed to

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5 stimulate the cells above the media control. Moreover, the
combination of anti- κ R(33-52) and PHA or SAC did not
result in increased cell proliferation compared to PBMC
cultures receiving mitogen only.

10

x. Neutralization of U50,488N-mediated suppression of
IgG synthesis by anti- κ R(32-52) antibody in vitro. In
addition to lymphocyte proliferation, U50,488H is a potent
inhibitor of SAC-induced IgG synthesis in human PBMC
15 cultures (6). To determine whether anti- κ R(32-52) was
capable of neutralizing the suppression of IgG synthesis,
PBMC were preincubated with anti- κ R(32-52) followed by the
addition of U50,488H and SAC, and IgG levels measured on
day 10. Results indicate that U50,488H at 10^{-8} M and 10^{-7} M
20 inhibited IgG synthesis by 67% and 85% respectively (5).
The inclusion of anti- κ R(32-52) in culture was found to
neutralize suppression of SAC induced IgG synthesis in a
dose dependent manner. In contrast, similar
concentrations of normal RGG failed to neutralize the
25 observed suppression.

To assess the specificity of anti- κ R(32-52)
antibody, PBMC were incubated with specific antibody or
RGG followed by co-culture with U50,488H or the μ receptor
selective agonist (DAGO) and IgG production measured by
30 ELISA. The results indicate that, whereas, anti- κ R(32-52)
neutralized U50,488H-mediated inhibition of SAC-induced
IgG synthesis, anti- κ R(32-52) was unable to neutralize
DAGO-mediated suppression of IgG synthesis.

These results indicate that in addition to
35 binding lymphocytes and macrophage, anti- κ R(32-52) is
capable of neutralizing the ability of a κ R selective
agonist (U50,488H), but not a μ R selective agonist (DAGO).
Additionally the antibody demonstrated significant
inhibition of both lymphocyte proliferation and
40 differentiation to antibody synthesis. These results
further demonstrate the specificity of anti- κ R(33-52) for

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5 the human kappa receptor.

As can be seen from the antibody binding data presented above, the site directed polyclonal antibodies raised in rabbits using the C5a-agonist form of the molecular adjuvant conjugated to the κ receptor sequence
10 were capable of binding to normal human cells and cell lines expressing mRNA specific for the human κ receptor. Flow cytometric analysis of a neuronal cell line (NT2), normal blood-derived CD14+ monocytes, monocyte-like cell lines (U937 and THP1), normal blood derived CD3+ T cells
15 and a T cell line (Jurkat), and human B cell lines (SKW6.4 and CESS) revealed that the cells were all bound by anti- κ R(33-52) in a specific manner. The anti- κ R(33-52) did not bind to a cell line determined not to express mRNA for the human κ receptor.

20 Anti- κ R(32-52) was found to specifically neutralize κ R-selective agonist (U50,488H)-mediated inhibition of lymphocyte activation. The antiserum was found to neutralize, in a dose dependent manner, U50,488H-mediated inhibition of: 1) SAC-induced lymphocyte
25 proliferation; 2) PHA-induced lymphocyte proliferation and; 3) SAC-induced IgG synthesis. In contrast, DAGO-mediated suppression of SAC-induced IgG production was not affected by anti- κ R(32-52). These results suggest that this site directed polyclonal antiserum specifically
30 interacts with the human κ R on PBMC. The results presented indicate that polyclonal anti- κ R(32-52) antibodies interact with the exposed N-terminal region of the κ R. While this antiserum effectively blocked U50,488H-mediated lymphocyte activation, it did not activate
35 macrophage or lymphocytes.

While anti- κ opioid receptor antibodies are exemplified above, conjugation of C5a agonist peptide to peptides corresponding to μ and Δ specific peptides has resulted in the successful generation of specific
40 antibodies to the μ and Δ epitopes.

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EXAMPLE 4.

Comparison of Immunogenicity of Epitope-C5a agonist constructs with epitope-KLH conjugates.

10 The following experiment was performed in order to compare the potency of the molecular adjuvant of the present invention with a widely used method for enhancing the immune response to peptide epitopes. The objective was a direct comparison of the response to a construct of MUC1 epitope-C5a agonist and the same epitope conjugated to keyhole limpet hemocyanin (KLH) in mice. The results are summarized in Table 2.

20

Table 2
MUC1 Specific Ab Isotype Titers
Produced with Different Immunogens.

25

Ab Isotypes and Titers ^a						
	IgA	IgG1	IgG2a	IgG2b	IgG3	IgM
YKQGGFLGLYSFKPMPLaR ^b (SEQ ID NO:2)	0	0	1260 (5/5)	1780 (5/5)	0	6310 (5/5)
YKQGGFLGL-KLH ^c (SEQ ID NO:6-KLH)	0	100 (2/5)	0	0	0	5010 (4/5)

30

^a Sera were screened against MUC1 peptide and mean titer values of responders are shown. Parentheses indicate the number of responders. Ab titer is defined as the sera dilution within the linear range at which specific reactivity is lost.

35

^b Five C57BL6 mice were immunized and boosted with YKQGGFLGLYSFKPMPLaR (SEQ ID NO:2) and sera were obtained as indicated in the Material and Methods section. Standard error of responder titer values was less than 32% for all isotypes.

40

^c Five C57BL6 mice were immunized and boosted with YKQGGFLGL-KLH (SEQ ID NO:6 conjugated to KLH) and sera were obtained as indicated in the Materials and Methods section. Standard error of responder titer values was less than 25% for IgM and less than 40% for IgG1.

45

A similar experiment was performed in rabbits. The immunogens used in rabbits were the κ - and μ - opioid

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5 receptor epitopes, FPGWAEPDSDNGSAGSEDAQL (SEQ ID NO:9) and
GDLSDPCGNRTNLGGRDSL (SEQ ID No:11), respectively. The
serum antibody titer and antibody subtypes produced in
rabbits injected with the two compositions containing the
different immunogens were compared.

10

i. **Peptide conjugates.** In one instance the
epitopes were conjugated to KLH via a lysine residue added
synthetically to the N-terminus of the epitope along with
an alanine residue which acted as a spacer. In this
15 experiment, glutaraldehyde was used to effect conjugation.

In the another case, the epitopes were linked to the N-
terminal end of the C5a agonist YSFKPMPLaR (SEQ ID NO:1)
using the solid phase peptide synthetic methodologies
described above in example 1.

20

ii. **Immunization protocol for rabbits.** Rabbits were
immunized s.c. with 500 μ g of either the epitope-KLH or
the epitope-YSFKPMPLaR (epitope-SEQ ID NO:1) constructs in
complete Freund's adjuvant (GIBCO, Grand Island, NY).
Booster injections were administered on days 30 and 60 in
25 incomplete Freund's adjuvant. Serum was collected
starting at day 60 post-immunization.

iii. **Antibody determination.** The presence of rabbit
IgG specific for the peptide epitopes was determined by
ELISA as previously described (8).

30

Rabbits immunized with the epitope-C5a agonist
generated high titer IgG Abs specific for the opioid
receptor peptide epitopes. The rabbits immunized with the
opioid receptor epitopes conjugated to the carrier protein
KLH also produced high titer antibodies specific epitopes
35 to which they were injected. These results demonstrate
that the decapeptide C5a-agonist was as effective as the
large molecular weight protein, KLH, conjugated to the
epitope at inducing specific anti-peptide antibodies in
non-rodent species.

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While certain preferred embodiments of the present invention have been described and specifically exemplified above, it is not intended that the invention be limited to such embodiments. Various modifications

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may be made to the invention without departing from the scope and spirit thereof as set forth in the following claims.

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